

REMARKS

Claims 1-8, 10-12, and 14 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended to increase the features of claims 9 and 13, claims 10 and 11 are amended to change their dependency from canceled claim 9 to pending claim 1, and claims 9, 13 and 15 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. No new matter is added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration because amendments are to incorporate allowable dependent claim features into independent claim; and (c) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

Applicant notes with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in claim 13. By this Amendment, claims 9 and 13 are canceled, and the features of claims 9 and 13 are incorporated into independent claim 1. Thus, claim 1 is allowable.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 6-12 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 6,540,368 to Akaoka; rejects claims 2-5 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Akaoka in view of Applicant's admitted prior art; rejects claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Akaoka; and rejects claim 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Akaoka and Applicant's admitted prior art. The rejections are moot with respect to canceled claims 9 and 15 and is respectfully traversed with respect to the remaining claims.

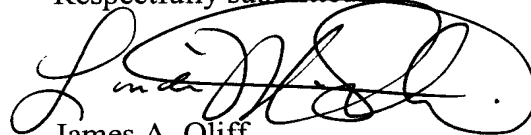
As discussed above, independent claim 1 is amended to incorporate allowable subject matter of canceled claim 13 (and intervening claim 9). Therefore, claim 1 is allowable.

Claims 2-8, 10-12, and 14 are allowable at least for their dependence on claim 1, as well as for the additional features they recite. Withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the application are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted



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